

Needing God's Leading, Part 3 - Romans 2:14-21 – May 8th, 2011

- This is part three of a series that I've titled; "Needing God's Leading." While this title for the text may seem poetic, the text itself is prophetic.
- Here-to-fore, we've seen the Apostle Paul present a most convincing, and convicting argument which is leading to mankind's verdict of guilty.
- Then, the beloved Apostle will, by the Holy Spirit, ever so beautifully, brilliantly, yet bluntly, lead man to his need for repentance before God.

- However, in order for him to do that, he has to sort of walk into it, as opposed to run into it, knowing that man must be led one step at a time.
- In addition to this, though the steps are the same, those led on those steps are not. This is why Paul speaks to the moral and immoral alike.
- Be that as it may, up to this point he has been most successful in leading, step by step, that that which they're needing, bringing us to #7.

7. To Honesty (Verses 14-16)

(14) (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, (15) since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) (16) This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

- v14 Parenthetically, the Gentiles, though not having the law, do by nature what's required by the law, because in themselves, resided the law.
- v15 It's shown by the law being written on their hearts, and their consciences bearing witness in their thoughts accusing and defending them.
- v16 Paul takes it a step further saying how this will take place on the day when God judges men's secrets through Christ, as His gospel says.

- In order to know what Paul is saying we must first know what he's not saying, namely, to do what the law requires, is to fulfill what it requires.
- This begs the question of why Paul makes such a big deal about Gentiles doing things required by the law, when they do not have the law.
- I would suggest that the answer is found in verse fifteen, where we find that, though absent in writing, they have the writing on their hearts.

- In concert with the law written on the tablets of their hearts, the conscience makes for a wonderful harmony bearing witness with obedience.
- In other words, Paul is succeeding in God leading to their needing to be honest with their selves and their God, whose law accuses otherwise.
- Until a man is honest about his need for the Lord, he will never have hope of being honest before the Lord, and this only comes from the Lord.

William Newell "...[The] Law [is] as an external revelation from God ...[and] does not mean that they are fulfilling the claims of the Law, for they do not have it, but that they are unconsciously aware, as moral beings, of what is right and wrong. ...God is describing how He has constituted all men: there is a "work" within them, making them morally conscious. ...Man's conscience bears witness to this law-work in his moral constitution; consequently men daily, hourly, constantly, are having "inward thoughts" which have voices of accusation or approval, according as a man's conduct may be."

8. To Integrity (Verses 17-21)

(17) Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; (18) if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; (19) if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, (20) an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— (21) you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?

- v17-18 Jews rely on the law, brag about their relationship to God, know His will, approve what's superior because they're instructed by the law.
- v19-20 As guides for the blind, light for dark, instructors of the foolish, teachers of infants, it's because the law embodies knowledge and truth.
- v21 Paul asks of those who teach others; do they not teach themselves? He asks those preaching against stealing; do you yourself steal?

- Lest we see Paul as being seemingly sarcastic and even sort of caustic, we must remember what it is that he is needing to accomplish in this.
- Also, we must remember to whom it is he is needing to accomplish it with. He has to hit moral law abiding Jews head on with their immorality.
- It's for this reason that he brings into question their integrity, by asking them in their piety how they can preach against stealing, while stealing.

- Now, with this template of understanding, we can begin to draw the bold lines of integrity, on the blank paper of the man's rank duplicity.
- In so doing, I can't brag about being superior, guiding the blind, as a light in dark, instructing fools, teaching infants, and preaching integrity.
- The only way man could ever hope to see himself as he really is before a holy God is for his duplicity to dismantle his self perceived integrity.

- Perhaps we would do well to define this integrity before we go any further. Integrity is defined as the adherence to moral and ethical principles.
- Furthermore, and for the purpose of our study here, it's defined as the state of being whole, or undiminished, sound, or perfect in its condition.
- In so much that, in the context of what Paul is writing, those adhering to the morality of the law, are unable to preserve the integrity of the law.

- One might ask; "what's the difference between honesty and integrity?" The short answer is honesty tells the truth, integrity preserves the truth.
- With honesty I can be faithfully trusted, with integrity I can be faithfully tested. The integrity of God's Word exposes the dishonesty of man's.
- Whereas honesty will say it, integrity will follow through and do it. If I am honest with myself, and about myself, I will have integrity before God.
- About now you may be saying to yourself; I didn't really come to church today to get an English or Grammar lesson, I came for a Bible lesson.

Revelation 3:13-22 NKJV (13) "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (14) "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: (15) "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. (16) So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. (17) Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— (18) I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. (19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (21) To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (22) "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' "

- One cannot help but notice that there is an eerie similarity between the moral Jews there in Rome, and the lukewarm Christians in Laodicea.
- It seems they both did not see themselves as God saw them, which explains why they did not see their need for God to lead them to repent.
- There are many similarities, the most interesting of which is that their dishonesty, and their lack of integrity, was the thing that blinded them.